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TAGS: [CASC](#) [AMED](#) [ASEC](#) [CMGT](#) [TBIO](#)

SUBJECT: CAIRO AVIAN INFLUENZA WORKING GROUP (AIWG) UPDATE

REF: A. STATE 202102

[B](#). STATE 153802

[C](#). STATE 181885

[D](#). STATE 183776

[E](#). CAIRO 07552

[F](#). CAIRO 08073

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[1](#). (U) Summary: Embassy Cairo's Avian Influenza Working Group (AIWG) met November 8 to review Mission preparedness and interactions of Mission organizations with the Government of Egypt (GOE) on AI prevention. Although surveillance has detected no H5N1 in Egypt, post continues to work on preparedness, particularly as outlined in reftel A. Mission interactions with the GOE have improved Egypt's preparedness as well, and Mission agencies continue to assist the GOE's efforts to develop a response capability. End summary.

Consular Preparedness

[2](#). (SBU) Cairo's Avian Influenza Working Group (AIWG) met November 8 to review the main points of reftel A on Mission preparedness and determined the following: There is no Tamiflu available in Egypt for private US citizens in the event of an AI outbreak in Egypt; regular flu vaccine is available in Egypt on the market; clinical care in Egypt is not adequate to deal with an AI outbreak.

[3](#). (SBU) In regard to communicating with the unofficial American community, the AIWG considered the logistical problems presented by a Town Hall meeting, which would require a venue with a large audience capacity, and favored the use of a warden message as an alternative. The message will discuss what the USG can and cannot do for American citizens, and emphasize that the USG is working with the GOE to respond to the AI threat. Embassy has posted an AI Fact Sheet on its website and has drawn attention to the existence of the fact sheet in an unrelated warden message. There have also been inquiries about obtaining flu vaccine from the Embassy. Certain measures still need to be addressed, including quarantine measures, questions about air transport, and American companies' contingency plans. These issues will be discussed at the next AIWG and EAC meetings.

[4](#). (SBU) The RMO briefed the AIWG on recent activities of the Medical Unit. The Medical Unit has discussed possible funding for AI needs with other organizations. The AIWG also agreed to develop drawdowns and tripwires for discussion at post's next EAC meeting. RMO also noted that the Mission needs training on the use of protective gear.

Recent Mission-GOE Interactions

[5](#). (SBU) GOE invited NAMRU-3 representatives to attend a GOE interministerial meeting November 1, which was attended by representatives from Ministries of Health (MOH), Agriculture (MOA), Environment, Commerce, Aviation, Foreign Affairs (MFA), and WHO. NAMRU reported that the purpose of the meeting appeared to be solely to show that the government is united and doing something; however, it is not clear that GOE is prepared to respond to AI effectively at this point.

[6](#). (SBU) ECPO Counselor briefed the MFA the same day on USG's AI concerns and activities, and discussed the interministerial meeting that took place earlier that day. MFA representatives reported that Dr. Magda Rakha, Undersecretary at the MOH, is the GOE AI POC, and that GOE has drafted a National Plan to respond to AI. Embassy later obtained a copy of the draft plan.

USAID/APHIS Providing Training to GOE

[7](#). (SBU) USAID and APHIS have been working together to provide funding (USAID) and expertise (APHIS) for USG

activities supporting GOE efforts to combat AI. USAID is reviewing funding for four requests from the GOE: Upgrading of labs to BLS-3 status (biosafety); purchase of lab supplies; equipping and training mobile rapid response teams, and training for Egypt's Veterinary Service (VS). USAID is funding the MOH's program to enhance the capacity of 17 Mobile Rapid Response Teams through an on-going grant. The mobile units will include both veterinary and medical personnel and will have the capacity to rapidly enter any suspected outbreak area and manage critical aspects of outbreak control, e.g., testing, quarantine, communications, community mobilization. National level training assisted by NAMRU-3 begins on November 19th.

18. (SBU) APHIS reports that veterinary diagnostics and surveillance remain weak points in the GOE's ability to respond to an AI outbreak. It is not clear that GOE has the capability to respond rapidly, that it can respond to both animal and human contagion, and is able to communicate effectively between ministries in order to mount a timely emergency response. The VS and the MOH have not communicated effectively to date on AI matters. To assist with this issue, APHIS recently provided USAID-funded training in the US for representatives from the Veterinary Service.

19. (U) UNDP invited USAID, WHO, NAMRU & APHIS to brief a joint meeting with other UN agencies, at a date to be determined. In addition, APHIS may request funding assistance from the UN agencies for regional training for veterinary diagnosticians, which USAID cannot fund.

NAMRU-3 Working with GOE, WHO, Saudi Arabia on AI

110. (SBU) NAMRU-3 has been actively providing health surveillance in Egypt and the region for a number of years, and continues to work effectively with the GOE on wild bird surveillance and specimen testing. To date, the surveillance has detected no H5N1 in Egypt. NAMRU-3 representatives attended a regional WHO meeting November 29-30. NAMRU-3 is also working with local schools to develop AI response plans. Saudi Arabia requested assistance from NAMRU-3 regarding its concerns that the Hajj could be vulnerable to an AI outbreak. Public Affairs is working on publicity that focuses on NAMRU-3's work with the GOE on surveillance and detection of AI, with the message that American and Egyptians are working shoulder-to-shoulder with high technology to protect the people of Egypt.

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